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## Viewing cable 06BOGOTA5603, POSSIBLE GOC-FARC TALKS: VIEW FROM THE COLOMBIAN

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06BOGOTA5603**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06BOGOTA5603</a>	<a href="#">2006-06-21 22:05</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Bogota</a>

Appears in these articles:

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CO N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 005603

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SUBJECT: POSSIBLE GOC-FARC TALKS: VIEW FROM THE COLOMBIAN  
LEFT

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood.  
Reason: 1.4 (b,d)

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) Reftel outlined reasons why some mainly leftist interlocutors considered GOC-FARC peace talks possible in President Uribe's second term. According to these contacts, the FARC's top demands are land reform, political reconstruction, and social welfare programs, along with a need for personal security and "respect" for the FARC's "struggle." They said the GOC should continue military pressure and consider creative proposals to draw the FARC leadership into talks. They also asserted U.S. engagement would be vital to a successful process. End Summary.

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What the FARC Wants  
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¶2. (C) Former peace commissioner Daniel Garcia Pena said the FARC's priority is land reform. Academic Fernando Cubides added the FARC wanted to reverse appropriations by paramilitaries. Demobilized FARC commander alias 'Nicolas' concurred, saying, "This is not about confiscation but about redistribution." The guerillas' economic agenda has mellowed over time, according to President Pastrana's peace commissioner Camilo Gonzalez, from "a Stalinist to a Social Democratic platform." Garcia Pena stressed that, "The FARC define themselves as Marxists but their agenda is not."

¶3. (C) The FARC's agenda would include social issues. In a 2006 communique, FARC leader Manuel Marulanda referred to FARC proposals at Caguan which the GOC did not address: unemployment subsidies, money for social work projects, and pilot programs for alternative crops to coca. Cubides emphasized welfare programs to alleviate underlying problems driving coca cultivation. Ex-FARC commander 'Nicolas' spoke of the restructuring of wealth and social reinvestment, applying the FARC adage "social justice is the name of peace" to food, health, and jobs. Policy analyst Ana Teresa Bernal recounted that at Caguan, "Marulanda said the most important thing was employment.... a jump-start plan not profound reforms. Mostly the FARC wanted to show the population that their plans were of benefit."

¶4. (C) Politically the FARC wants "a reordering of the political-administrative map" (said Cubides) and "a government of national reconstruction" (said Garcia Pena). The consensus view was that a constitutional assembly would be essential to write any accord into law. Gonzalez noted the FARC had no popular base and would demand a guaranteed bloc in such a forum (on the order of 10-15 percent). Form is as important as substance, he said: "It would be a fiction but an important one." Reparations Commission chair Eduardo Pizarro pragmatically agreed that an assembly is not a reform per se, only a framework for future changes. It would satisfy what several speakers signaled as the FARC's vital need for recognition as political actors. In Pizarro's more pointed phrasing, "The FARC will negotiate to save face. They need to justify forty years of war."

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Policy: 'Push' and 'Pull'  
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¶5. (C) Interlocutors recommended a combination of military pressure and policy incentives to both push and pull the FARC to the table. Despite the overall leftward leaning of the group, none favored leniency; all agreed it was critical for the GOC to sustain military operations against the FARC until they agreed to negotiate. Ironically it was ex-FARC commander 'Nicolas' who was most emphatic on this point:

"Continued military pressure is essential...to show the FARC there is absolutely no possibility they can take power with military action."

¶6. (C) All said military pressure must go hand in hand with political, economic, and social incentives. (Embassy

MILGROUP says even COLMIL commanders echo the same sentiment.) Gonzalez spoke at length on this theme, stressing the need to break out of conventional molds and explore "audacious ideas." With respect to agrarian reform, for example, he commented positively on Marulanda's Caguan proposal that the GOC give the FARC lands to showcase agrarian reforms, however unrealistic it might sound. For a political agenda, he urged a dedicated planning task force, on the same lines as MOD strategy teams.

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U.S. Role: Prestige, Mediation, and (Non-)Extradition  
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¶7. (C) Marulanda's communique of January 2006 said, "The gringos play a part in the conflict, and any solution must pass through them." Several commentators stressed the critical role of the U.S. in any peace process with the FARC.

A large part of this is related to prestige; according to Gonzalez, "The FARC would only negotiate with those they consider powerful, such as the U.S. Because they have a simplistic conception of the U.S. as their enemy, they would also respect it as an interlocutor. This would be the FARC's biggest triumph."

¶8. (C) The U.S. role has practical ramifications, too, particularly regarding the FARC's desire for guarantees of personal security against the threat of extradition. Pizarro advised that in coming months Washington's attitude should "move from stick to carrot, from tough to talking." He (echoed by 'Nicolas') said the U.S. "big incentive" is extradition, and suggested U.S. mediation would be required before a deal was struck. The presence of the international community at peace talks would lend to the proceedings the prestige the FARC leadership craves.

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How Might The FARC Respond?  
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¶9. (C) The FARC leadership is marked by a high degree of unity and unanimity, according to analysts, and would be unlikely to split into factions during talks. Pizarro stressed its "enormous internal cohesion" and lack of infighting over decades. Garcia seconded this, saying the Secretariat was "profoundly unified.... Decisions are by

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consensus." Marulanda is said to have the last word; but his advanced age (around eighty) throws open the issue of succession. Looking ahead, FARC behavior in peace talks is difficult to predict, because it would depend on the personalities in charge at the time.

¶10. (C) Garcia said FARC members of campesino origin (like Marulanda and military leader alias Mono Jojoy) tend to be most pragmatic, while those of urban origin and higher education (e.g., ideologue Alfonso Cano) are most radical and stubborn. Unfortunately, Pizarro predicted leadership in a negotiation scenario would likely pass to the urban political types, while military chiefs would take a back seat. 'Nicolas' summed up, "Mono was pragmatic only because he doesn't believe in negotiation; he's a man of action. Cano would never negotiate, for the opposite reason, that he's too political.... Ivan Marquez would be disposed to peace. He has said that after 40 years of fighting it's time to end it but without betraying Marxist principles.... The Army should get Cano and Mono, to allow Marquez to breathe and lead."

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Past Attempts: Lessons Learned?  
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¶11. (C) Three sets of FARC talks have occurred in the last 25 years, each failing for distinct reasons:

- In 1983-6 at La Uribe, the FARC was more dogmatic than pragmatic, says former negotiator Camilo Gonzalez; its Marxist rhetoric has since mellowed.

- In 1991 the FARC broke off brief talks at Caracas/Tlaxcala; Gonzalez cited excessive FARC demands for the failure, while ex-EPL leader Alvaro Villaraga added FARC "outrage" at parallel processes with other guerilla groups, heavy COLMIL strikes including on the FARC's high command, and post-Soviet communist disarray.

- The last attempt, in 1999-2002 at Caguan, was merely a "pretense," said Gonzalez, with the FARC buying time to strengthen its forces and the GOC launching Plan Colombia. Analyst Alfredo Rangel said the GOC showed up with no plans: "The government did not make any proposals at Caguan; all proposals came from the FARC." FARC leader Marulanda similarly attributed the 2002 collapse to GOC unpreparedness and its failure to offer anything concrete in return for demobilization.

¶12. (C) Historically the FARC has not negotiated in good faith. Villaraga and ex-FARC commander alias 'Nicolas' insisted the FARC was serious about peace and political reform in 1983-1986, but academic Roman Ortiz said both were proven wrong by the FARC's 1982 Conference resolution to double its forces. 'Nicolas' confirmed that at the 2000 plenum the FARC's leading ideologue Alfonso Cano proposed striking the oligarchy while its guard was down. With regard to drugs, there is no evidence for the FARC's purported interest in eliminating trafficking (reftel). The precedents suggest a wary attitude towards FARC intent, as well as an attitude of 'trust but verify' during any period of cease fire.

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Comment  
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¶13. (C) The interlocutors cited above either honestly or dishonestly portray the FARC as serious about its political agenda and depict peace talks as a forum for setting national policies and programs. Unquestionably the FARC is to some degree a captive of its political rhetoric, but we would expect FARC policy interests to take a back seat to the conditions and obligations of their demobilization in any eventual peace talks. We also would expect the GOC to reject any discussions of national policy beyond the conditions of FARC re-insertion. We do not believe that the FARC is so unified that no elements would seek a separate peace with the government, but we agree that if talks ever begin with the FARC as such, they will be able to maintain a consolidated negotiating position. Finally, it was predictable that U.S. direct involvement would be sought. We see no reason even to contemplate such a step.

WOOD